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STATINTL

CIA Director Analyzes Agency's Role

By Claude Sitton

America's chief spy is not given to speechmaking. Thus, the fact that Richard Helms addressed the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington Wednesday was news in itself.

It was the first public discussion of the Central Intelligence Agency's role by him since his appointment as its director. Helms offered no flag-waving banalities. Instead, he tackled head-on the old and disturbing issue of whether spying has a place in a democratic society.

No concern for the editors' opinions flushed Helms from the cover of the shadowy empire over which he presides. He came because of the Nixon administration's recognition of the public unrest over governmental power and the uses to which it has been put. No government can long survive if it ignores the wishes of the governed. And reaction to spying at home by the Army and the FBI indicates the governed think that government has overreached its mandate.

Helms' manner and dress seem calculated to reassure any who think the CIA is involved. A tall, trim man with receding dark hair shot through with gray, Helms looks like a grim Bob Hope. From the Ivy League cut of his navy suit, button-down collar and rep tie to the measured understatement of his speech, the director projects an air of calm, deliberate determination.

There is nothing evasive or indirect in Helms' treatment of CIA activities at home. He emphasizes that the agency

is specifically prohibited by law from having domestic police, subpoena or law enforcement authority. "We do not have any such powers and functions," he asserts. "We have never sought any. We do not exercise any. In short, we do not target on American citizens." So much for the little old lady in Frog Level who thinks a CIA spook has been peering over her shoulder.

However, Helms is less than candid or reassuring in describing the CIA's activist role abroad. A listener would never know that its intervention in the affairs of other countries has sometimes led to insurrectionary hijinks. And, on occasion, to America's public embarrassment.

The National Security Act of 1947, Helms conceded, enables the agency to conduct those foreign activities that the national government assigns to a "secret service." But any covert projects always come second to the production of intelligence, he insists.

Helms disclaims ultimate responsibility for any clandestine efforts to rearrange the world's political landscape. All undercover escapades are under the direct control of the executive branch — the President. This theme runs through the director's analysis of the agency's functions. "We answer to those we serve in government."

Logic is on Helms' side when he argues

that at no time in history has America needed more to keep abreast of foreign developments. What is the scope of the nuclear threat to U. S. security? What are current Soviet intentions? How soon will China have an intercontinental ballistic missile? But, if intelligence is a must for military planning, it also is necessary to prevent conflict. It would be unthinkable, for example, to conclude an arms agreement with Russia without means for checking compliance. And if intelligence can tell the nation what measures are needed to counter aggression, it can also cut the costs of those measures by narrowing the choices.

Helms conceded he has no easy answer to those who consider spying incompatible with democratic principles. "The nation must to a degree take it on faith that we are honorable men devoted to her service," he says. Further, he contends that both executive and legislative branches have more than adequate supervision of CIA's activities.

Spying is and has been a dirty business. But realism in today's fearful and fearsome world makes it necessary, even for a democracy. Informed criticism of the CIA, however, deals not with its intelligence gathering but instead with the agency's paramilitary operations overseas. The record shows clearly that in regard to the latter the supervisors of whom Helms speaks either have been slack or have used the agency for questionable purposes.

CIA indiscretions abroad are not unlike those of the Army and the FBI at home — a case of government exceeding its mandate from the governed. Were this not true, Helms might not have found it necessary to make the first speech of his career as director last Wednesday.

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NEWS

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A Creed for Intelligence

In what may be the first public address in a decade by a director of the super-secret Central Intelligence Agency, Richard Helms stressed that the CIA played no domestic security role. Its mission is intelligence about foreign powers, and the CIA does "not target on American citizens."

Seeking to allay the apprehensions of those who discern contradictions in an agency of a free society pursuing foreign intelligence operations, Mr. Helms said:

"We are, after all, a part of this democracy; and we believe in it. We would not want to see our work distort its values and its principles. We propose

to adapt intelligence to American society, not vice versa."

That's a worthy creed which should be resolutely observed, not only by the CIA, whose mission focuses on external security, but by other agencies, whose mission may focus in part on internal-security. Especially should domestic surveillance occur only under the most clearly defined, narrowly limited conditions if the democratic values and principles to which Mr. Helms alludes are not to be distorted. And in view of recent disclosures and allegations, those definitions and limits to domestic surveillance should not be taken on faith.

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Who's Spying Now?

If you think the Government is spying on you, blame it on the FBI or the Army, maybe, but not on the Central Intelligence Agency. CIA Director Helms has assured the American Society of Newspaper Editors, in his first public address since taking office in 1966, that "we do not target on American citizens."

A few hours after Mr. Helms' speech, President Nixon's press secretary was trying to cool some of the criticism about FBI domestic spying activities. "I sense that an impression is developing in this country that there is surveillance of private individuals," he said. "This is unfounded and repugnant to this Administration."

If the CIA is not in the business of spying on American citizens, if the Army is getting out of the business, and if the FBI doesn't do anything that would be "repugnant" to the Nixon Administration, we wonder what Deputy Attorney General Richard Kleindienst was talking about the other day when he told Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz that the Government's domestic "surveillance and intelligence apparatus" is "the best in the world"? Maybe it's all done with mirrors.